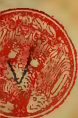


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# A PLEA FOR A MONUMENT

TO THE

Martyrs of the War of the Revolution.

Read Before the National Congress

OF

DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION,

In Washington, D. C., February 21, 1896,

By Mrs. S. V. WHITE, of Brooklyn, N. Y.,



Chairman of Monument Committee.

Hon. FELIX CAMPBELL, Treasurer.





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## Martyrs of the War of the Revolution.

At the battle of Long Island, in August, 1776, the British army captured 4,000 Federal soldiers. Not knowing what else to do with them, nor how to guard so many prisoners, it was decided to use as Prisons the transports which had brought the soldiers from England, together with some abandoned ships of war. These were anchored in New York Harbor. They were easily guarded there, and when once on board these vessels, they literally left hope behind. Their sufferings were beyond the power of description. They were crowded into the holds and between decks by night, without a ray of light to cheer the sick and dying—so crowded they could not move about—and only by simultaneous movement did they manage to lie down. Starved for want of food, smothered for want of air, the less hardy of the men were soon relieved by death. But for more than seven years, this crowding was continued, for all the naval prisoners were eventually transferred to these ships, and consigned to the care of that fiend in human shape, Captain Cunningham, whose crimes and tortures were afterward recounted in his own country, when, in 1791, he was tried, confessed, and was convicted and executed for forgery.

Fevers, smallpox, measles, and other disorders swept them speedily out of life, and the "carcasses," as the polluted bodies were designated by the brutal officer in charge, were carried ashore and buried in trenches in the sand.

When the war was ended, the story was told by the remnant of men who survived. Of them, a young Virginian, named Cooper, did much for his comrades, in the way of comforting promise of what glory should be theirs, when America was free and independent; when the story of their hardships should be made known, and the dishonored bones of those heroes should be gathered together, and a monument erected over the graves of all who should suffer these ignoble deaths. Each morning, the officer appeared on deck, and offered amnesty to all who would accept it, and enlist in the army of the King, with rations for the starving, with clothing in place of rags, cleanliness in place of filth, and better than all else, freedom to breathe again God's pure air, of which they had so long been deprived. And what is the record of that body of brave men? It is said only ONE in all those thousands of heroes went over to the enemy; and to our everlasting glory be it recorded, THAT ONE WAS A FOREIGNER, A HESSIAN. I have not been able to find that one of our AMERICAN soldiers, even under that torture, sold his "birthright for the mess of pottage."

How universally this was rejected, let the long

lists of the dead answer. From one of those floating charnel houses, "the Old Jersey," there was an average of about ten dead prisoners brought up each morning from the pestilential hold or between decks where they had passed away. There is an estimate that over 11,000 died on this ship alone, while she lay at anchor, in Walabout Bay, and the names are recorded in the British war office, of 7,950, who died on the Jersey alone. They died that we might live ; that we might grow great and rich and strong ; that we might lead the world in Art and Science and Civilization.

And yet, they are the unremembered dead. Not one in every hundred of the inhabitants of the United States remembers the story of their lives, or the story of their deaths ; nor that the ground which held their bones was once sold by the City of Brooklyn for taxes ; nor that after the bank caved in, and the march of progress cut into the ground, and the bones were being washed out to sea, that a Mr. Benjamin Ayerigg employed the poor children in the neighborhood to gather them up at one cent per pound, that he might give them burial. Spasmodic attempts have been made by many societies, and by many individuals ; by Patriots and Politicians to retrieve this wrong. Patriotic Congressmen have wasted their breath in calling on Congress to build a monument to the Martyrs of the Prison Ships of the War of the Revolution. Failure hitherto has crowned each enterprise with defeat, and now the American people are

determined. An organization has been formed on Long Island. An ex-Congressman who used all his influence to induce Congress to set apart a sum for this purpose, the Hon. Felix Campbell, of the People's Trust Co., is Treasurer.

The Monument Committee have decided that on THEIR calendar "there is no such word as fail," and they pledge themselves to fulfill the promise the young evangelist, Cooper, made to his dying comrades in the prison. Let every patriot in our land, man or woman or child, take up the cry and call so loud that every citizen of this glorious Republic shall hear the sound, and gathering tribute from palatial city to prairie farm house, from the coffers of the rich and the pockets of the poor, shall hasten to honor the graves of our ancestors. This will be done, and done largely by individual gift. The grateful Sons, and the grateful Daughters, all patriots, will contribute, and a Monument shall be set up which will be worthy of those who died, and worthy of the country for which they sacrificed their lives.

And where shall this Monument be placed? Where else than on that plot of ground wherein their bones repose; that spot of verdure toward which their eyes turned with longing during those weary years while they languished on the prison ships. By a merciful, and to us of to-day it seems a miraculous Providence, the site of General Greene's old fort, where General Putnam

also held headquarters, is left to us intact, undesecrated by either street or building. A plot of more than 40 acres, set in the midst of a populous city by the sea, in near proximity to the battlefield of Long Island, where 4,000 of them were taken prisoners in one day, in sight of the scene of their martyrdom, is set apart by the hand of destiny and kept for us sacred although forgotten. We have, like Martha, been "cumbered with much serving." We older people have busied ourselves with the world's work, and amused ourselves with the world's pleasures, while our children have grown up and forgotten, and their children have come upon the scene, and the old story has been forgotten to be told. More than five generations of allotted life have passed, and still our ancestors of the War of the Revolution are counted among the unremembered dead.

A titled foreigner lately visited our shores, and almost the first day of his sojourn among us asked his entertainers to show him our great buildings and monuments. He was shown the unfinished tomb of General Grant, and the bronze statues of Washington and Lincoln. "But have you not a monument to the heroes of the Revolution, for they WERE brave men. Have you nothing but Bunker Hill?" Alas, for human records, kept only in the memories of the busy men who keep pace with the rapid world of to-day! The entertainers of royalty did not even know there was a Gethsemane in

our very midst, that within sight, from the highest building in New York, the spot can be seen where their bones are mouldering into dust; where so many thousands died on the old Jersey alone, and there were 15 transports in that terrible fleet anchored in the Bay.

Patriots of the grandest Republic in the world, we call upon you to-day to waken from your sleep of more than a century and make atonement for our ingratitude. Let us not each wait for the other. Let not the American Sons, nor any other Sons of the American Revolution, stand back to see who shall have the honor. Let not the Colonial Dames, nor the Daughters, nor the American Daughters, quibble longer in the settlement of the question as to who is entitled to sit on the right hand or the left. Let us join hands and complete the circle. From Maine to Louisiana, from the Gulf to the Northern Pacific, let us cross again to New England, and thus surround a territory so vast, so rich, so magnificent, that no voice disputes its claim to be the grandest wonder of the world. Let us no longer wait for legislative act to build this monument to our fathers. Let it be an act of reverence on the part of every individual. Let every dollar of the \$200,000 asked for come with a blessing on its face, and come warm from the hearts of America's patriot children.

As the Southern matron sounded the call for the purchase of Mount Vernon, so let the call be heard for

this monument to be built. It is said women were first at the tomb of our Lord, and we were told they were EARLY at the sepulcher. Alas! we have not been early, but we will atone for the past by our determined efforts in this cause. We will gather our offerings from the whole country, and build such a monument that our children's children shall not need to ask: "What mean ye by these stones?" But the story will be already told, and told so well that it will remain in the minds of all the generations that are to come.

ELIZA M. CHANDLER WHITE.

















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